



The End of Nature, by Bill McKibben (\$46.95, Viking). McKibben's pessimistic thesis is that human ability to change nature - whether the climate or genes - has brought an end to nature as we have always known it. Despite his doom laden message, the author's compelling and brilliant prose urges one into action. "Restraint - not genetic engineering or planetary management - is the real challenge, the hard thing. Of course we can splice genes. But can we not splice genes?"

Unsettled Outlook - New Zealand in a Greenhouse World, by Tom Clarkson, Blair Fitzharris and Matt McGlone (\$19.95, GP Books).

Armed with this and the above, no-one can be excused for not knowing exactly what climate warming is about. Written for the layperson by a plant scientist, atmospheric physicist and climatologist, *Unsettled Outlook* points out that, although the forecast for agriculture may be rosier in a greenhouse world, the same cannot be said for natural ecosystems. The authors' conclusion is that we should act now to avert climate warming, and "decide that environmental goals - clean air, unpolluted waters, protected natural landscapes, sustainable use of the country - should rank equally alongside economic, material goals."

A Flying Start, compiled and edited by B.J. Gill and B.D. Heather (\$29.95, Random Century in association with the Ornithological Society of New Zealand).

Commemorating 50 years of OSNZ, this 218-page book consists of sections on the history of the society, reminiscences by notable members, a miscellaneous section on different aspects of birds, and finally biographies of deceased leading lights in OSNZ. Anyone interested in OSNZ's work and the personalities involved over the years will find this a worthwhile reference.

Save the Dolphins, by Michael Donoghue and Annie Wheeler (\$39.95, David Bateman).

It says much for the high calibre of Department of Conservation staff that this book, destined for an international audience, has been written by two within DoC. Included are chapters on the most threatened species, dolphin biology and behaviour, and human/dolphin interaction. The authors also expose the shameful treatment doled out to dolphins by humans. To lift the spirits the final section highlights recent actions taken to save dolphins.

The Hoiho: New Zealand's Yellow-eyed Penguin, by

Adele Vernon, photographs by Dean Schneider (\$24.95, Hodder & Stoughton).

Forest & Bird readers will be well acquainted with Dean Schneider's moving photos of the yellow-eyed penguin, which have done so much to draw attention to the plight of this dwindling species. This small (44-page) book is a good introduction to the penguin, both for older children and adults. Adele Vernon's vivid descriptions of the penguin's behaviour are testimony to many hours of close observation.

The Incredible Kiwi by Neville Peat (\$39.95 hard cover; \$29.95 soft cover, a *Wild South Book* Published by Random Century in Association with TVNZ).

Until recently there was little published, outside the scientific literature, on our most famous and extraordinary native bird. Now three books on kiwi have either appeared or are about to appear. The three fill quite distinct niches. Raymond Harris Ching's *Kiwis* is a monograph with his painting supported by authoritative accounts of the biology and conservation of the kiwi. *The Incredible Kiwi* takes the popular middle ground, and my own *Kiwi - A Secret Life*, written for the Natural Heritage Foundation, is designed primarily as an educational book. In writing this review, I recognize the risk of my bias as an author and contributor to the other two books.

The coverage in *The Incredible Kiwi* is comprehensive. There are chapters on the distinctions between the three species, their

biology and current research. There are accounts of kiwi in captivity (including a list of "kiwi houses"), of Maori traditions about kiwi, and of contacts with humans in general (mostly bad experiences for the kiwi) and of conservation measures. The book begins with a chapter, which seems misplaced, on the history and commercial use of the kiwi as a national emblem.

The book is well written and superbly illustrated. It probably contains the best collection of photos of kiwi anywhere.

Unfortunately it shows obvious signs of being rushed into print with a number of content and typographical errors. Some of these are serious enough to mislead the reader in the status, distribution and relationship of the kiwi.

In the distribution map of the three species of kiwi, little spotted kiwi are incorrectly recorded on Little Barrier Island. Brown kiwi are either incorrectly placed or omitted from several places in South Westland and Fiordland. Great spotted kiwi are present at least 100 km further south than is shown - at least to the Karangarua River. Some of these errors are repeated in the text, but there are also contradictions with the map.

The status of brown kiwi is given as "fairly common in certain regions" which is correct, but it is also considered to be a "Threatened Species". Similarly the great spotted kiwi is described as "fairly common" but its apparent decline in South Westland is not mentioned. There is contradiction in the discussion of the relationships of kiwi. If kiwi are so different from other birds as to be placed in their own Order, as is stated, (not the prevalent scientific view), then the discussion of their ratite relatives, emus and ostriches etc is confusing without explanation.

The author also incorrectly states that Maori no longer make kiwi cloaks. In fact this longstanding but now restricted art continues (using feathers from dead kiwis).

These errors aside, there is much valuable information in the book, an insight into the oddities of the kiwi and the difficulties of finding out about them, all presented in a very readable form.

TVNZ's film of the kiwi, which *The Incredible Kiwi* was designed to accompany, appears to be having a long and difficult incubation, but when completed will, with the three books, provide a good range of sources that can only draw much needed attention to the plight of the kiwi.

Reviewed by Jim Jolly (kiwi scientist)

Childrens' Titles

The Legend of the Kea, by Philip Temple; illustrated by Chris Gaskin (\$9.95, Hodder & Stoughton).

A reprint of the original hard cover edition, this beautifully illustrated book tells in mythical terms how New Zealand's birds came to live and behave the way they do. Kritka the kea is the rascally hero of the story. 4 to 10-year-olds.

One Lonely Kakapo, by Sandra Morris (\$9.95, Hodder & Stoughton).

Delightful verse ("One lonely kakapo dancing to the moon, Two shy bitterns booming out a tune") accompanied by imaginative illustrations in this counting book for 1 to 4-year-olds.

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